

DST supported NGO network tackle COVID-19 at community level through S&T interventions

The network of S&T enabled NGOs spread across 22 states of India, supported by the Science for Equity Empowerment and Development (SEED) Division of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) have demonstrated capabilities in containing COVID-19 through various S&T interventions and complimented the efforts of the Government at different States and below levels.

Approximately 1, 20,000 face masks were produced complying with the guidelines of Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA) to the Government of India and were distributed in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Rajasthan Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, West Bengal and so on, predominantly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, through the network of 30 NGOs and Community Based Organizations while other members of the NGO network have also been activated to follow.

3D printed face shields manufactured through innovative open-source design were distributed to 2500 police personnel and frontline health workers in Maharashtra. Hand sanitizers and Hand wash as per WHO recommendations have been prepared for distribution among the community. Protocols for manufacturing 100% natural liquid hand wash as per USFDA guidelines using Reetha (*Sapindus mukorossi*) and hand sanitizers with ethanol, hydrogen peroxide, glycerol, and extract of Mugwort (*Artemisia nilagirica*) and Citronella were developed.

The operations are being further scaled up to produce 3,00,000 face masks, 3,000 face shields, 15,000 litres of hand sanitizer, and 5,000 litre of liquid hand wash in the coming fortnight. Women SHGs, Kisan clubs & Youth are being mobilized for dissemination of these interventions involving State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM) as well. Awareness and capacity of the communities about these interventions, crucial for containment of the Pandemic, have been built by these NGO networks.

Apart from preventing COVID-19 infection, these interventions have also provided an alternate source of livelihoods for women SHGs. The potential high costs and impact of the outbreak on the rural population have thus been minimized by these measures that have been put in place by the strong S&T enabled NGO network of the DST.



Professor Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary DST, while elaborating the need for the immediate, intermediate and long term S&T interventions stressed, “Clearly NGOs reaching a wide cross-section of society, especially the less empowered sections, is a huge enabler in providing COVID-19 solutions from mass awareness, to distribution and manufacture of protective aids, to

training the trainers, etc. It is very heartening to see that some 30 NGOs receiving core-support from DST have rapidly swung into action on the promotion of resilience and rejuvenation”.

DST had issued an advisory to its NGO network and initiated actions for immediate interventions for containing COVID-19 outbreak at community level through S&T interventions and creating awareness on critical issues like social distancing, quarantine, use of masks, sanitizers, recommended health and hygiene practices, mental health, immunity building and wellbeing in rural as well as urban areas. Realising that the containment of the pandemic is closely coupled to local dynamics of livelihood, nutritional and socioeconomic status, efforts have also been made to strengthen the S&T capability of this grassroots social network.

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